



Linkages to Learning, a Collaborative School-based Partnership among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, Public and Private Agencies, Families and Communities

Searching for School Supplies: As Easy as A-B-C

For parents struggling to pay the rent and to feed families, the cost of these basic "learning tools" – notebooks, pencils and pens, paper, rulers, crayons and the essential backpack are often out of reach. Scrimping together the resources to purchase school supplies is simply beyond their budget.

Dr. Paul Scott, a former principal and MCPS representative to Linkages Resource Team, shares his memories of how the situation typically unfolds. "As teachers remind children to bring in supplies, they'll notice that many children simply say "I don't have a pencil," or "I forgot" or "We couldn't buy that." And they become aware that some children are quietly borrowing supplies from classmates. While teachers are known to reach into their own pockets to help fill the gap, their efforts alone are rarely sufficient to meet the needs of their students, especially in the schools served by Linkages to Learning, where a majority of students are poor."

Dr. Scott continues, "Many children who lack school supplies feel uncomfortable asking another student or a teacher for help, and those who speak English as a Second Language or are new to the school may find the situation especially difficult. From an educational perspective, every time a child needs to stop to search for supplies, valuable learning time may be lost to the child or the entire classroom. Children who lack basic school supplies may not be able to complete homework, lowering their academic performance and self-esteem."

Fortunately, Linkages to Learning has been able to count on their partnerships with faith and community groups, area businesses and agencies like **Community Ministries Interfaith Clothing Closet and Learn Shop** as well as individual donors to help close the gap. This summer and fall, Linkages staff and partners reached out and received generous donations to assure that students had the supplies they need. Ads run by the **Gazette Newspaper** were key to assuring donations, as was the assistance of the **Montgomery County Volunteer Center**, which helped recruit local partners, including **Staples and BearingPoint**.



BearingPoint Employees Bring School Supplies

Alison Reilly, Managing Director at BearingPoint and Co-Director of Community Volunteer Programs, explains why their company decided to help Linkages to Learning families. "Going back to school should be an exciting time for children. Our committee had conducted research that showed that a large number of children began the school year without the supplies necessary to successfully complete their class work. Our employees wanted to make a meaningful contribution to families in each of the counties where we live. We were thrilled that we were able to help many school systems in a meaningful way."

Vanessa Morales, site coordinator at Parkland Middle School, reflects the experience of many schools served by Linkages. "The response from the community was incredible. We also partnered with **Westland MS PTA, Millian Methodist Church and Oak Chapel United Methodist Church**. With the help of their volunteers, we were able to serve our students with the greatest needs."

Being prepared for school gives students the "tools" they need to do their work— learning. And teachers depend upon students who are ready to learn— students who can access their lessons and respond appropriately. We thank all of our partners for playing a key role in helping Linkages to Learning students and their families maximize their potential.



Highland E.S. Students Scrimmage At MSI's Community Soccer Program

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Summer Literacy Programs Join Linkages to the Library

Five years ago, the first Linkages to the Library program was launched at Highland ES, introducing many children and parents to the joy of family reading through their local library. Each subsequent summer, Linkages has expanded this award-winning program with the support of volunteers and resources from Montgomery County Public Libraries, Comcast, Friends of the Library, First Book, USA Today and MCPS staff.

This year, when the County's budget reduced staff and services at many public libraries, Linkages responded by adapting the traditional Linkages to the Library program to provide summer reading programs at the school rather than the library. While Linkages to the Library programs were offered at four schools (**Harmony Hills ES and Parkland MS, Viers Mill ES, Greencastle ES**) through partnerships with the **Aspen Hill, Kensington Park and Fairland Libraries**, new Linkages to Literacy models emerged at four elementary schools (**Broad Acres ES, Summit Hall ES, Highland ES, Montgomery Knolls ES**) and two middle schools (**Eastern MS and Silver Spring International M.S.**), with support from the **Silver Spring and Long Branch Libraries**.

Ilene Sparber, a member of Linkages Resource Team explains, "This was a classic instance of how the collaborative nature of Linkages can yield positive results for families, even in the face of challenges. Our staff did a terrific job in adapting the model while maintaining its core value of promoting reading among families. The site coordinators built upon their relationships within the school to develop new activities and joined with MCPS professionals, using their knowledge and experience."

Linkages' site coordinators "brain-stormed" with partners and each other to create several exciting activities and events.

Families from **Montgomery Knolls ES** enjoyed "campfire night," roasting marshmallows over an open fire to make s'mores and joining in a sing-along led by Victoria Aurich, a local folk singer and guitarist.

Author Bruce Adelson joined 6th graders and their families at **Silver Spring International MS**, describing how he developed a book about sports trivia. At the event, parents met with Linkages staff, Joanne Vanderhorst, PTSA president and Carrie Pecor, the school's ESOL teacher.



A treasure hunt and library tour helped orient **Greencastle ES** students and families to the Fairland Library.

At **Summit Hall ES**, parents and children joined with third grade teacher Heather Ruth at "Techno Night," making books using PowerPoint in the school's computer lab.

Harmony Hills ES students paired up with their reading buddies from **Parkland MS** and enjoyed a "booknic" (a picnic with books) at Aspen Hill library.

At the Kensington Park Library, **Viers Mill ES** teachers led "literacy in your home" workshops for parents, and Comcast sponsored special kick off and grand finale events.

Thanks to our wonderful partners. We couldn't have done it without you!

- ♥ **Comcast**, for funding our summer coordinators, backpacks, t-shirts, materials and food for our opening and closing events, and for organizing the book drive with local libraries and Barnes & Noble;
- ♥ **Montgomery County Public Libraries** and its librarians and support staff, for delivering services to the children and families we mutually serve and for supporting Comcast's Book Drive;
- ♥ **First Book, USA Today, Barnes & Noble and community patrons**, for donating new books to Linkages' families;
- ♥ **Friends of the Library** for funding transportation to the libraries using MCPS buses
- ♥ **MCPS administrators, teachers and specialists**, for helping us coordinate the program and access its media centers;
- ♥ **Community student and adult volunteers**, who contributed their time and energy; and finally,
- ♥ **Linkages to Learning school-based staff**, who worked very hard to plan activities, reach out to families and engage partners to make the program a success.

Together, Linkages to the Library and the school-based Linkages-to-Literacy programs served 443 participants, with 343 elementary school students, 100 middle school students and 214 parents.



Above: Reading buddy with his pal at Broad Acres E.S.

Left: Highland E.S. families work together at their school's media center.



Comcast's Area Vice President and General Manager, Craig Snedeker, reads with a child at Veirs Mill Elementary School.

MSI's Community Soccer: A Gift from the Heart

When Todd Reuben, MSI (Montgomery Soccer Inc.) assistant coach was lost in the Pentagon crash on September 11, 2001, he left a great void in the lives of his family, friends and soccer team, the Potomac Wolves. But he also left a group of youngsters so moved by his spirit that they gathered donations and asked MSI to "give low-income children the opportunity to play soccer with MSI, and learn the values of teamwork, dedication to excellence, and commitment to the community Todd embodied."

At the same time, MSI player Sam Reiss was asking his bar mitzvah guests to support MSI's scholarship fund. These contributions prompted MSI to consider how to better fulfill its mission to promote soccer to all Montgomery County's youth. "While MSI always had a generous scholarship fund, we weren't reaching students from communities where parents have limited English skills and lack a network of coaches and volunteers" said Leon Reed, president of MSI.

"Interestingly, this all happened right around the time that Linkages to Learning had approached us about collecting soccer shoes for children playing informally, especially at Broad Acres ES, where the PTA had begun to organize its own soccer initiative. Well, one thing led to another, and we began working with Broad Acres PTA and Linkages to develop the program" said Reed.

Reed notes, "Setting up a soccer program provides a healthy after-school activity for kids, but the involvement of their parents is at least as important. MSI Community Soccer provides a chance for parents to become involved in their kid's lives and helps develop skills as organizers and leaders while they're coaching and managing teams." The Community Soccer Program is fully funded by MSI, providing training, support, uniforms, balls, flags and even hundreds of soccer shoes. Now in its third season, MSI has enrolled over 120 children this fall for 12 teams at Broad Acres. Organizer and former PTA president Jose Otero is heading the Broad Acres effort, working with MSI to recruit and train parents and community members as coaches.

This year, Highland ES became MSI's second Community Soccer Program. Linkages to Learning helped organize an 8-week summer training program, with 16 parents and four teachers coaching 16 teams of 198 students. According to Hugo Galindo, community soccer coordinator at MSI, Linkages site coordinator Conrad Dennis "does the dirty work, making up the lists of players and contacting people. At Broad Acres, many tasks are managed by the PTA."



MSI Community Soccer Coordinator Hugo Galindo works with coaches, kids and parents at Highland E.S.

Galindo explains there is both soccer expertise and enthusiasm in the neighborhoods Linkages serves. "We have experienced coaches and even former professionals volunteering. But we also have parents and at Highland, teachers, who are new to the game. Our volunteer coaches are supportive of one another. Whether a new volunteer or a seasoned veteran, there's much to be learned and much to be gained."

Brian Freiss, a 5th grade teacher at Highland explains why he became involved, even though he'd never played or coached soccer. Freiss said "Highland emphasizes how important it is to know the children you teach. It's a great opportunity to see the kids outside the class in another environment. It's a positive experience for the kids and their enthusiasm carries into class. They are always talking about it. And they know the responsibility that comes with playing on the team," said Freiss. "All the coaches talk about how they (the kids) must do their homework. As a teacher, I get to see how the kids learn—to understand their learning styles, and carry that knowledge back into the classroom," said Freiss.

"This is my third year teaching here, and I can really see the difference. The parent involvement is amazing. They set up the chairs, help get things ready, and of course they stay to watch practices and games. Parents are much more prevalent in the school. MSI's soccer program is strengthening the relationship between parents and teachers—and as a teacher, I have a chance to build on that excitement," Freiss said.

Highland's principal, Rosie Ramirez, who is often seen cheering the children on during practices, notes that for students who struggle academically, the program provides them a chance to succeed.

"Besides the coaches, a number of other teachers come to watch—they get to see kids participating in different ways than in the classroom. They see kids focus during soccer—and kids

who don't give up. No one says "I can't do this." As educators, our challenge is to capture and transfer this "can do" attitude to the classroom.

A teacher can share with the child what they observed at soccer: "I saw you fall down, but you got up and tried again." This gives the child the confidence that they can do hard things—and that they can reach their goals in school, too. At soccer, teachers have an opportunity to meet and cultivate relationships with parents. It's a less stressful dynamic for parents, and makes them feel more comfortable about approaching teachers with other things in school. We are working with our writing teacher to extend their interest in the teams to develop sports writing skills through our school news team," said Ramirez.

Galindo, a retired teacher and principal, observes "Every time a parent cheers for their child, they are building a stronger family. And every time one of those families makes connections with their neighbors and with their children's friends, they are building a stronger community."



Thanks to our Donors and Partners



Besides delivering Linkages' counseling, prevention and family support services, Linkages staff work with community partners and volunteers to augment family resources, resolve emergencies and support programming. Thanks to our wonderful partners for helping the children and neighbors we serve:

- ♥ **The Colburn Family Foundation**, for donating 1,240 D.C. United soccer tickets to Linkages to Learning families through the D.C. United and United for D.C. "Kicks for Kids" program.
- ♥ **Dr. Louis Espejo and Pearle Vision** of Rockville, for donating eye exams and glasses for 30 Linkages to Learning children.
- ♥ **Travilah E.S. P.T.A., The Church of Ascension and Home Depot**, for donating 103 back-packs and school supplies for Summit Hall students.
- ♥ **Temple Beth Ami**, for donating school supplies, diapers, sports equipment, baby food, educational toys and videos for Linkages to Learning families.
- ♥ **Rockville Jaycees**, for taking 10 Linkages students at Maryvale E.S. shopping and for purchasing back-packs and school supplies.
- ♥ **Kim Lynn**, for donating six new back-packs to students at Maryvale E.S.
- ♥ **Liberty Grove Church**, for donating school supplies to Linkages students at Banneker E.S. and Greencastle M.S.
- ♥ **Tzu Chi Buddhist Compassion Relief Foundation**, for donating 49 backpacks filled with school supplies for Silver Spring International M.S. students.
- ♥ **Pyle M.S.'s Student "Peace Core" and Suzi Kaplan**, for donating school supplies to Linkages to Learning students.
- ♥ **Lorraine Trexler** of Kensington, for donating 16 backpacks to Linkages students.
- ♥ **An anonymous parent donor**, donating the instrument rental fee to allow a Silver Spring International M.S. student to play in the band.
- ♥ **Amee Desjourdy and Human Resources Dept. of NASD**, for hosting 15 students from Maryvale E.S. on "Take Your Child to Work Day."
- ♥ **Darlene Hardin**, former Summit Hall E.S. teacher, for donating a portion of her retirement gift to support Linkages at Summit Hall.
- ♥ **Summit Hall E.S. staff and parents**, for donating clothing, furniture, and household items to Summit Hall families.
- ♥ **Henry Aldana. P.A. of Aldana & Associates**, for donating a \$165 scholarship to a Summit Hall E.S. parent to attend a food management course at Montgomery College.
- ♥ **Jawad Ettayebi and Einstein's Bagels** of Chevy Chase, for donating dozens of bagels to families at Broad Acres E.S.
- ♥ **Nilda Colgrove of MCPS Parent Information Training Center**, for presenting educational workshops to the Hispanic Women's Educational Support Group at Fox Chapel E.S.
- ♥ **The Montgomery County Child Passenger Safety Program**, for distributing Child Safety seats to Linkages families.
- ♥ **Wanda Resto Torres, Montgomery County's Latin American/Hispanic Affairs Liaison**, for facilitating a domestic violence workshop at Fox Chapel E.S.
- ♥ **Fox Chapel E.S. staff and parents**, for donating clothing to Fox Chapel families.
- ♥ **Joaquin Trejo and Mary Lee O'Connell, C.R.N.P.**, for presenting a bilingual parent education workshop on communicating about human sexuality, and to student volunteer **Yuning Zhang**, for providing child-care.
- ♥ **Montgomery Knolls E.S. staff**, for donating baby items to Linkages families at the school.
- ♥ **Rowaida Tabri** of Rockville, for donating furniture to families at Maryvale E.S.
- ♥ **Model Home Clearance Center** of Gaithersburg, for donating office furniture to Linkages schools.
- ♥ **Michelle Basen** of Rockville, for donating a bed to a Rolling Terrace E.S. family.



Thanks to our Donors and Partners



- ♥ **J.P. Morgan - Chase** of Gaithersburg, for donating 40 Pentium II computers.
- ♥ **The Yadgroff Family** of Potomac, for donating baby furniture, clothing and toys.
- ♥ **Daniel Kubis of Olney**, for donating an 18-speed boys Trek mountain bicycle.
- ♥ **Thrift Shop Committee of the Lutheran Church of St. Andrew**, Silver Spring, for donating funds to assist families with medical and housing needs.
- ♥ **The Animal Legal Defense Fund** for donating a Pentium 133 computer to a Linkages family.
- ♥ **Ishrat Salahuddin and Baskin Robbins of Congressional Plaza** of Rockville, for donating gift certificates to recognize Linkages' volunteers.
- ♥ **CREATE Arts Center** in Bethesda, for donating a scanner to a Linkages' school office.
- ♥ **Linda McMillan** of Rockville, for donating books and toys for Linkages children and families.
- ♥ **Susan Abrams** of Rockville, for donating a computer to a Linkages family.
- ♥ **Helping Hands of Rockville's Senior Center**, for donating dozens of hand-knitted sweaters, hats and baby blankets to Linkages families.
- ♥ **Suzanne Borden and Joe Rubin** of Chevy Chase, for donating 15 Dr. Seuss books to Linkages children in honor of their son's birthday.
- ♥ **Juliann Goldman and Ken Brown** of Rockville, for donating books to Maryvale E.S.'s Head Start program in honor of their daughter's birthday.
- ♥ **St. Mark's Orthodox Church** of Bethesda, for donating 10 "spring" baskets to 36 children and families at Highland ES.
- ♥ **Wheaton Presbyterian Church**, for donating 10 "goody bags" for students attending summer camps at Highland E.S.
- ♥ **Kiwanis Club of Wheaton**, for donating 4th of July baskets for 22 families at Highland ES.
- ♥ **Holy Cross Health Partnership** for offering health resources to Linkages' parents.
- ♥ **Old Country Buffet**, for donating complimentary meals to Linkages students and families.
- ♥ **Wheaton Presbyterian Church**, for providing classroom and child care space for ongoing ESL classes.
- ♥ **Miguel Hernandez at Modell's Sporting Goods** for donating a soccer ball for Linkages to the Library at Silver Spring International M.S.
- ♥ **Mt. Calvary Baptist Church** for inviting Linkages families to their Spring Clothing Distribution of Work Force Attire.
- ♥ **Reverend Margee Iddings**, Faith Resource Connection, for donating services at four Women's Retreats at Rising Phoenix this spring.
- ♥ **Beverly Farms E.S. P.T.A.**, for stocking Maryvale E.S.'s food pantry and donating clothing for students and families.
- ♥ **Binnie Spiegel and the Jewish Community Center Pre-school** in Rockville, for donating 4 boxes of snacks and 2 boxes of school supplies to Maryvale E.S. students.
- ♥ **Teri Bender**, for donating tickets to Green-castle/Banneker families to attend a Malcolm X drama presentation.
- ♥ **Robin and Julian Mansfield** of Bethesda, for donating a car to a Summit Hall E.S. family, and to **The Church of Ascension** for its partnership.

We thank all of our donors and supporters. If we've inadvertently omitted you, please call Cathy Hellmuth at 240.777.1184. We'll be sure to include your donation in our next newsletter.



From October 2002 to October 2003, Linkages' Americorps Volunteer Coordinator Yu-Ling Huang worked with sites to develop resources.

Parkland MS Hosts Community Health Fair

Over 150 community members attended Parkland's Summer Health Fair, organized by Linkages to Learning, with 14 organizations and 20 volunteers supporting the event, including:

- **Shady Grove Adventist Hospital**
- **Holy Cross Hospital**
(Dr. Julio Ramirez & Lilliana Pinzon)
- **Proyecto Salud**
- **Dr. Fernando Juliao, D.D.S.**
- **Dr. Cornfield Chiropractic Rehabilitation Centers-**
(Dr. Frederick Aaron)
- **4-H Youth Development Program**
- **National Institute of Health Identity Program**

- **Mental Health Association**
- **Montgomery County Department of Recreation**
- **Montgomery County's Department of Health & Human Services' Smoking Cessation Program, Asthma Improvement Resources, Health Promoter Program, Immunization Program, Early Childhood Initiatives (Infant & Toddlers and Child Link) and HIV Program**
- **Community Volunteers**



Linkages Mothers Tea

The springtime Linkages Tea celebrated and raised resources for Linkages Mothers Empowerment Programs: **Through the Kitchen Door** training, focusing on food preparation, nutrition, personal and professional development; **Mothers Retreats at Rising Phoenix**, offering activities and counseling in the mountains of Western Maryland; and **Mothers Support Groups**, school-based groups for mothers facing many challenges. U.S. Representative Chris Van Hollen, Montgomery County Councilmember Mike Subin, and Pulitzer Prize nominated journalist Ann Crittenden, author of *The Price of Motherhood* addressed guests, and an award from Country Executive Douglas M. Duncan was presented to Rev. Margee Iddings, founder and sponsor of Rising Phoenix. Linkages mothers shared delicacies they prepared with *Through the Kitchen Door* and guests enjoyed chamber music from Blair H.S. musicians.

Auction and Raffle Donors

Accessible Beltway Clinics & Dr. John P. Rosa, Allfirst Bank, AFI Silver Theatre & Murray Horwitz, American Plant Food, The Aspen Hill Club, Austin Grill, Babies 'R Us, Barnes & Noble of Bethesda, The Bicycle Place of Silver Spring, Black Rock Center for the Arts, California Tortilla, Carrabba's Italian Grill, The City of Rockville & the Glenview Mansion, CLG Promotions, Clyde's Tower Oaks Lodge, Comcast, Congressman Chris Van Hollen, Coolfont Resort, David's Beautiful People, Dusty Wissmath's Fly-fishing Clinic at Whitetail, Embassy Suites at Chevy Chase Pavilion, Gabriel Restaurant, Gaithersburg Marriott Washingtonian Center, Gary Rosenthal Collection, The Gazette Newspapers, Grapeseed Bistro, Green Papaya Restaurant, Hollywood East Café, Johnson's Flower & Garden Centers, Kitchen Etc. of Rockville, L'Academie de Cuisine, Landmark Bethesda Row Cinemas, Larry Brown Jazz Quartet, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, Mama Lucia's Restaurant, National Chamber Orchestra, Neiman Marcus, NeuStar, Inc., Old Country Buffet, Olney Grill, Olney Theater, PAX 66 TV, Politics & Prose Bookstore, Red Lobster Restaurant, Regal Entertainment Group, Rika's Pastries, Round House Theater, Starbucks, Union Y Sabor Catering & Through The Kitchen Door, The Way-goose, Rio Sport & Health Club, Whole Foods of Kentlands, Rockville & Silver Spring.

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Platinum Sponsor

The Colburn Family Foundation

**Linkages to Learning thanks friends and partners
for their generous support**

Linkages Partnership with Holy Cross Builds Healthier Families

Linkages to Learning at Broad Acres E.S., Fox Chapel E.S. Gaithersburg M.S., Highland E.S. and Summit Hall E.S. have begun a new partnership with Holy Cross Hospital to improve the health of some of our community's most vulnerable members.

Holy Cross hopes the partnership will reach the un- and under-insured adults served by Linkages, as these ethnically and linguistically diverse populations face higher health risks than other groups. English and Spanish-speaking health profession-

als conduct workshops for parents, providing information about preventing and detecting diseases such as colon, prostate and breast cancers as well as chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and obesity.

Liliana Pinzon, a Colombian physician and ethnic health promoter, shares information with parents attending the Linkages' weekly Hispanic Educational groups. Besides providing the educational sessions, materials and food for participants, Holy Cross is linking mothers to free mammograms and pap tests and fathers to low-cost prostate tests.

Lieberman Visits Broad Acres E.S.

In September, presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Lieberman visited the School-Based Health Center, calling for federal funding to support the delivery of health and mental health services. Currently, 80% of the nation's 1,400 school-based health centers are funded by state or local government.

MCPS Superintendent Jerry Weast, Principal Jody Lelack Sen. Joseph Lieberman and County Executive Douglas M. Duncan at Broad Acres E.S.



Strep Research

The school-based health centers at Broad Acres and Harmony Hills are supporting a Children's National Medical



**School Based Health Center nurses
Camille Wheeler, R.N. and Ladys Lux, R.N.**

Center research study to determine which of two treatment regimes (Amoxicillin 1 time/day versus Penicillin 3 times/day) is most effective for treating strep throat.

Students at the school-based health centers are seen by the nurse practitioners, Cara Soifer



and Jane Taylor or physicians Phyllis L. Harris and Rebecca Carlisle. Parents of students diagnosed with strep may elect to participate in the study. Students are then randomly prescribed one of two antibiotic medications, which are provided free of charge. The nurses, Ladys Lux and Camille Wheeler, assign the medications and instruct parents and students on its proper administration. Students are then carefully monitored as to how they respond to the medication.

Study results will be analyzed once 300 students have participated. The results of this study will be shared with the medical community and may effect changes in current treatment practices. The research study was presented at the National Assembly on School Based Health Care's annual meeting in Reston, Virginia.

Linkages Students "Put Out the Smoke"

In June, Lee and Gaithersburg MS students participated in the County's Tobacco Free Sports Challenge, with Lori Snyder and Cristie Harhai, school community health nurses, who serve as sponsors for Putting Out the Smoke Clubs at these schools. Linkages to Learning helped recruit students and arranged transportation to the event. "POS Clubs" and the Sports Challenge were funded by HHS's Cigarette Restitution Funds Grant Program to help youth develop skills to keep themselves, their schools and their communities tobacco free.



Councilman Phil Andrews with students and chaperones at the Sports Challenge



Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive
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October 2003

Volunteer ESL Teachers Share and Learn



In September, Linkages volunteer ESL teachers gathered to network and learn tips from ESL specialist Ruth Takushi, M.Ed.

*From L to R:
Volunteers share best practices;
Victor Dao, volunteer at Broad
Acres, sings about learning
English in ten languages;
Volunteers enjoy "free samples"
from New Readers Press and
Longman Publishers.*

